

Where is reason and consistency in Health Canada’s proposed menthol cigarette ban?

Government takes diametrically opposed approaches to marijuana and menthol cigarettes – despite having the same stated goal

Montreal, Quebec, January 19, 2017 – Health Canada is abandoning any pretense of evidence-based decision making and regulatory consistency as the department seeks to ban menthol cigarettes while simultaneously pursuing the legalization of marijuana, claiming in both cases that it is in the interest of protecting youth.

“The Government says it is banning menthol cigarettes to protect youth. However, in seeking to legalize marijuana, the Government – including the Prime Minister – says prohibition does not work. So menthol cigarettes will be banned in order to reduce youth access, yet marijuana is due to become legal in order to reduce youth access. How can both the prohibition of one product and legalization of another protect youth?” asks Eric Gagnon, Head of External and Corporate Affairs for Imperial Tobacco Canada Limited.

Imperial Tobacco Canada made these comments yesterday in its submission to a Health Canada regulatory consultation that seeks to ban menthol cigarettes, something the department opposed when flavoured tobacco products were originally restricted in 2009 and again in 2014.

In contrast to the lack of data to support a ban on menthol cigarettes, there is overwhelming evidence showing that youth are using marijuana at vastly higher levels than cigarettes, menthol or otherwise. Health Canada’s 2014-15 Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey released in September 2016 found that, among students in grades 6-12, a record low percentage (three per cent) were daily or occasional smokers. Conversely, 17 per cent of students in grades 7-12 reported using cannabis during the preceding year.

At the same time, Health Canada refuses to take action on the issue of illegal tobacco. There are already twice as many illegal menthol brands available through the contraband tobacco market than are currently available on the legal market.

“If Health Canada was truly interested in tobacco control, they would focus on the illegal market, instead of simply appeasing radical tobacco control lobbyists. As a result, the Government is about to hand a monopoly on menthol cigarettes to illegal manufacturers, which are sold at pocket money prices with no regulatory oversight,” stated Gagnon.

To view Imperial Tobacco Canada’s submission to Health Canada, visit [this link](#).

- 30 -

Media Information:

Marie-Emmanuelle Khoury
Torchia Communications
514-288-8290 ext. 214
mekhoury@torchiacom.com

Kathleen Stelmach
Torchia Communications
416-341-9929 ext. 227
kathleen@torchiacom.com